

. . To the . .

Bideford Rural District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, 1914.


GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit to you my Fourth Annual Report, dealing with the General Health of the District during the year; the Condition of the Housing and other matters relating to the Public Health.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

LEONARD B. BETTS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (LOND),
Medical Officer of Health.



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Annual Report.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

The Bideford Rural District is situated in the North-West corner of Devon, and covers an area of 53,775 acres.

The country inland is hilly, and consists chiefly of arable and pasture land, with gorse-covered moors and some plantations of fir and other trees. The sub-soil is clay for the most part and this, combined with the dampness of the climate in winter, makes the roads and by-roads very soft and heavy. The badness of the roads is greatly aggravated by the heavy motor trolley traffic, which keeps them in a continual state of disrepair.

The coastline on the west is very rocky, with high cliffs and long serrated ridges of low rocks running out into the sea at right angles from the shore, making the coast very dangerous. It is, however, extremely beautiful, and the scenery attracts numerous visitors to the district in summer.

The air is exceptionally pure and bracing, coming direct from the Atlantic.

Population. At the Census of 1911, the population of the district was given as 6,306. Since then, there have been 506 births and 326 deaths, shewing a natural increase of 180.

The district comprises 14 parishes.

The inhabitants are chiefly occupied in farming, cattle-rearing, horse-breeding, etc. Fishing is carried on during some months of the year at Clovelly and Bucks Mills, and in spring and summer a considerable income is derived by the inhabitants of these and other seaside villages from letting rooms to visitors, who come in large and increasing numbers every year to the district. Clovelly, especially, with its picturesque "street" consisting of a long series of steps leading from the harbour up the hill, with attractive looking little white-washed houses clustering on either side, is a constant source of delight to artists. There is no occupation carried on in the district which has any injurious effect on the public health.

During the year ended March 31st, 1914, the sum of £579 4s 7d was expended in Out-Relief in the district, an increase of £1 9s 11d as compared with the previous year.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

Water Supply. There is no main water supply for the district, with the exception of Abbotsham, where 42 houses are supplied with water from the pipe passing through the village from the Northam Water Co's reservoir at Melbury.

Hartland Town has a storage tank, from which 60 houses are supplied, and the water is also conveyed to several street standards in the village. There are also several public and private pumps and wells.

Clovelly is supplied from a storage tank on the hill. From this 90 houses have the water laid on by pipes.

At Bucks Mills there are tanks supplied by springs.

In the other villages and outlying houses and farms, the water is obtained from public pumps, shallow wells or springs. There are many private wells. There are also many dipping wells, often at the roadside, and sometimes unprotected and liable to pollution from surface water. During the year, many of these wells have been cleaned out and protected. A covered-in surface well at Buckland Brewer, situated in the garden of a house where a case of enteric was diagnosed (the only case notified in the district), was found to be liable to pollution from the manure supplied to vegetables grown in close proximity. This well was cleaned out and the mouth of it protected by a covering of clay.

Rivers and Streams. There is no pollution of streams in the district.

Drainage and Sewerage. In Clovelly there is a main drain which discharges into the sea to the south of the town. In Hartland, Woolery, Buckland Brewer, Abbotsham, Parkham, and Buckleigh, the sewage discharges into septic tanks, which are regularly emptied and cleaned out. There is no drainage system in the other villages and outlying parts of the district. The waste water from the houses is usually thrown out on the fields and gardens. The better class farms and houses have drains which are carried to some distance from the house, and discharge into open ditches.

Closet Accommodation. The schools are provided with water or earth closets, which are regularly emptied and kept clean and in good order. These have all been inspected during the year and found satisfactory. In Clovelly village, there is a water carriage system; and also, in some of the other villages such as Hartland and Parkham, some houses are provided with water-closets, flushed from storage tanks in the top of the house. As a general rule, however, throughout the district, there are pail-closets and some remaining privies, which are cleaned out by the house-holders, the contents being used as manure for the garden. When, on inspection, "privy middens" are found, the owners are requested to substitute bucket earth closets, which request is, as a rule, willingly complied with. The better class houses in the district have water laid on from private wells, with force pumps.

Rainfall. The total rainfall for the year 1914 as recorded at Melbury reservoir, was 60.12 inches, being an increase of 5.045 inches as compared with the year 1913. The wettest months were March and December, with a rainfall of 9.58 and 10.025 inches respectively. The driest months were April, May, and June. (For these figures, I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Harding, observer at Melbury Reservoir.)

Scavenging. At Clovelly, house refuse is collected three times weekly by the public scavenger and placed on a shoot, on the side of the cliff. In Hartland, the scavenging is also carried out under the orders of the Council. In other parts the refuse is put on the fields, hedges, and gardens, or burnt.

SANITARY INSPECTIONS OF DISTRICT.

The Sanitary Inspector, Mr. H. D. Dack, reports that during the year there have been :—

- 460 Visits to premises and dwelling-houses.
- 25 Houses disinfected.
- 10 Notices for removal of refuse and surface accumulation injurious to Public Health.
- 5 Old wells cleaned out and protected.
- 5 New wells sunk.
- 4 New earth closets erected.
- 10 Old privies re-constructed into earth closets.
- 2 New drains.
- 9 Old drains re-constructed and repaired.
- 4 Samples of water taken for analysis.
- 1 House condemned.
- 31 Houses renovated.
- 13 Sets of plans passed by Council.
- 10 New houses erected by Council.

He also reports that he has visited through the year, the 10 registered dairies, 17 schools, 11 slaughter houses, two steam bakeries and laundry, and reported thereon. He has also attended to the cleaning out of the tanks at Abbotsham, Buckleigh, Buckland Brewer, Parkham, Hartland and Woolsery, and given attention to the scavenging of Clovelly and Hartland.

Samples of water have been taken from the Council's houses at Buckland Brewer and Parkham, and reported on by the Medical Officer.

SCHOOLS.

There are 17 Public Elementary Schools in the district. During the year an outbreak of Scarlet Fever occurred in Bideford town, which spread into the Rural district, causing several cases in various parishes. The following schools were closed, on account of this, to prevent the spread of infection and for purposes of disinfection :—

Newton St. Petrock for one week from March 16th.

Woolsery for two days from October 17th.

Clovelly School was also closed for one week from May 23rd, on account of an outbreak of diphtheria.

All the schools are in good sanitary condition, and are regularly cleaned.

The water supply is adequate.

FOOD.

Milk Supply. There are 10 registered dairies in the district, all of which have been inspected during the year.

Other Foods. No case of diseased meat has been reported during the year and the slaughterhouses are well kept and regularly inspected. Under the Tuberculosis Order (1913) of the Board of Agriculture (Diseases of Animals Act), 11 cases of Tuberculosis in cattle were reported.

WORKSHOPS.

There is a steam laundry at Buckleigh, employing about 30 hands. I visited this during the year and found it in excellent sanitary condition.

There are 13 flour mills (worked by water wheels), a letterpress printing works; some blacksmith's, carpenters' and dressmakers' workplaces. None of these employ more than two or three persons. No cause for complaint has arisen in connection with any of the above during the year.

There are two bakehouses, not underground, both kept clean and sanitary.

There are two outworkers' premises, which are only inspected by the Sanitary Inspector.

HOUSING.

During the year the card system has been adopted for recording the work of house-to-house inspection, the Sanitary Inspector producing the cards at the monthly Council meetings. Satisfactory progress has been made in the improvement of the housing in the district; cement floors being substituted for the old rough stones, and privy middens converted into bucket earth closets. In nearly all cases where repairs have been found necessary, the owners have been quite willing to carry out the improvements recommended by the Council.

The following Table shews the character of the work done in 1914 under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910.

No. of houses inspected for purposes of Sec. 17 of Act of 1909	No. of houses found unfit for habitation	No of notices to owners to repair	No. of houses repaired without closing orders	General character of defects found
153	1	32	31	Chiefly bad floors and privies.

During the year the Council has practically completed the erection of 10 houses under Part 3 of the Housing of the Working Classes Acts, 1890 to 1909, viz :—Two at Buckland Brewer ; two at Parkham ; four at Hartland ; and two at Woolfardisworthy. Mr. H. A. Chapman, A.R.I.B.A., Local Government Board Inspector, held three local enquiries into the Council's application, at Parkham, Woolsery, and Hartland, in March last, and the Local Government Board ultimately approved of the Scheme, and sanctioned loans for £146 for the land, and £2,200 for the buildings, repayable in 80 and 60 years respectively, and the Council has procured the loans from the Public Works Loan Commissioners at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest, repayable by half yearly instalments of principal and interest for the periods sanctioned, and such repayments amount to £5 10s and £88 per annum respectively, charged on the whole of the district.

The Council were fortunate in securing five good healthy sites, each a quarter of an acre in extent, for two cottages, and paid the sum of £25 for each site, with the exception of one, and for this £30 was paid, all freehold, and tenders were invited for building the cottages in accordance with plans and specification prepared by Mr. W. H. Heal, of Parkham, which were accepted on June 9th last, for £2,027 for carrying out the buildings in accordance therewith. Certain slight extras have been incurred ; Mr. Heal has acted as Clerk of Works, devoting his full time to supervising the erection of the buildings, and it is believed that the amount sanctioned will cover the whole of the cost of the scheme. The cottages are all but finished, and have been let by public tender, and there was apparently plenty of competition for the houses, and the best rent that could be obtained being 3s 6d per week inclusive, the whole of them were let for this amount and they will all be occupied by Lady-day next, and will produce an aggregate rental of £91 per annum. The accommodation of each of the cottages consists of large living room, back kitchen or scullery, three bedrooms, garden, w.c., pig sty, and tool shed. Wells have been sunk on each site and adequate water supplies have been provided for each cottage.

From the figures I have stated, it will be observed that the scheme is not self-supporting, and it is probable that there will be an annual charge of about £25 to the General District Fund of the Council or about $\frac{1}{4}$ d in the £ calculated on the present assessable value.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION OF THE DISTRICT.

1.—**Staff.** I regret to announce that the Sanitary Inspector, who had held office for many years, died in the month of October, 1914. He had been in failing health for some considerable time.

A new Inspector was appointed, who is actively pushing on the work of sanitary improvement in the district.

2.—**Hospitals.** In the month of April, arrangements were made for Infectious Cases from the parish of Abbotsham to be accommodated in the Bideford Borough Isolation Hospital. For the rest of the district there is no Isolation Hospital.

3.—**Water.** Nine samples of water were chemically examined during the year. Five were found fit for drinking purposes, and four unfit. Of these, two were full of deposit and unfit for domestic use, and the wells and inside of pumps were ordered to be cleaned out. One contained nitrates and organic matter, and one an excess of free ammonia. In these two cases, steps were taken to remove the causes of surface pollution, and on subsequent examination, the water was found fit for drinking purposes.

Diphtheria. Antitoxin is supplied, free of charge, by the Council to all doctors in the district. Throat swabs, sputum bottles, and capillary tubes for Widal's re-action are supplied free by the County Medical Officer, to whom specimens are sent for bacteriological examination.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There were 56 cases of infectious disease notified during the year, as compared with 37 in the previous year. Scarlet fever appeared in nine parishes; there being 35 cases in all, with one death (of a child under one year); but in no case was there any appreciable spread of the infection. The outbreak was an extension of an epidemic of scarlet fever which occurred in Bideford town during the spring and summer! In Newton St. Petrock, there were eight cases, all occurring in the same family. All the cases were of a very mild type. There were 10 cases of diphtheria with two deaths; four occurring in one house at Westward Ho!; two at Clovelly; three at East Putford; and one at Monkleigh. One case of enteric was notified from Buckland Brewer; no spread of the disease occurred. The well belonging to the house where this case occurred is situated in the kitchen garden, and the water, on examination, was found to contain nitrates and organic matter. Orders were given that the mouth of the well should be covered with clay, and that the earth should not be cultivated within a radius of 6-ft. from the mouth of the well; but should have grass grown on it and be kept free from manure.

Tuberculosis. Seven cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified during the year, four from Hartland, and one each from Clovelly, Woolsery, and Monkleigh. Three cases of other forms of tuberculosis were notified, all from Hartland.

I have visited all the cases notified and inspected the premises where they lived. The sanitary conditions were satisfactory in all cases except one, which occurred in a farm at Hartland, where the drainage was bad. I reported this case to the Council and steps are being taken to remedy the defects.

In all cases of pulmonary tuberculosis, I see that the patients have a bed and a room to themselves. They are provided with leaflets of "Instructions to persons suffering from consumption," giving directions as to necessary precautions to be taken to prevent spread of infection. The Council also provide each case with a "Crossley" sputum flask.

The cases are invariably visited more than once by the Tuberculosis Officer, who informs the Medical Attendant of the case of his approach-

ing visit, when all members of the family and possible cases of infection are systematically examined. .

On the death of phthisical patients, the Sanitary Inspector disinfects the premises with formaldehyde vapour.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births. There were 118 births registered in the district during the year, being the same number as those registered in 1913. Of these, births, 56 were boys and 62 girls. Five were illegitimate. The birth-rate is 18.7 per 1,000 of the population.

Deaths. There were 71 deaths registered as having actually occurred within the district. Of these, one was of a person usually resident elsewhere, and there were also nine deaths of persons usually living in the district, who died elsewhere, making the nett deaths belonging to the district 79, 44 males and 35 females, as compared with 80 in the previous year. The death rate for the year 1914 is 12.5.

The greatest number of deaths occurred in old people of 65 and upwards. There were 10 deaths from cancer, as against nine in 1913. Four were due to pneumonia, compared with 14 in the previous year ; and 17 were due to various forms of heart disease, mostly in old people. One death, of an infant, was due to scarlet fever, and three to phthisis.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The infant death rate for 1914 again shews a decrease, being 67.7 per 1,000 births, as against 93.2 for 1913. This is the smallest infant death rate since 1909. The number of deaths under one year was eight, as compared with 11 in 1913 and 16 in 1912.

TABLE I.

VITAL STATISTICS OF WHOLE DISTRICT DURING 1914 AND PREVIOUS YEARS.

Year.	Population estimated to Middle of each Year.	Births.			Total Deaths Registered in the District.		Transferable Deaths.		Nett Deaths belonging to the District.			
		Un-corrected Number.	Nett.		Number.	Rate.	of Non-residents registered in the District.	of Residents not registered in the District.	Under 1 Year of Age.		At all Ages.	
			Number.	Rate.					Number.	Rate per 1,000 Net Births.	Number.	Rate.
I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1909	6252		150	23.9	82			6	8	53.3	88	14
1910	6182		138	22.3	81			4	16	115.9	85	13.7
1911	6306	147	149	23.6	71	11.2		13	14	96.1	84	13.3
1912	6306	119	121	19.1	75	11.8		8	16	132.2	83	13.1
1913	6306	118	118	18.7	75	11.8	2	7	11	93.2	80	12.6
1914	6306	118	118	18.7	71	11.2	1	9	8	67.7	79	12.5

Area of district 53,775 acres.

Total population at all ages 6,306

Total families or separate occupiers 1,472

At Census 1911.

TABLE III.

CAUSES OF, AND AGES AT DEATH DURING THE YEAR 1914.

CAUSES OF DEATH.		Nett Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring within or without the District.									Total Deaths whether of 'Residents,' or 'Non-Residents' in Institutions in the District.
		All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 2 years.	2 and under 5 years.	5 and under 15 years.	15 and under 25 years.	25 and under 45 years.	45 and under 65 years.	65 and upwards.	
1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Scarlet Fever ...	...	1	1			2					
Diphtheria and Croup ...	...	2								2	
Influenza ...	...	2									
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis) ...	...	3			1	1		1			
Tuberculous Meningitis		1	1								
Other Tuberculous Dis.		4	1					2			
Cancer, malignant disease		10							1	5	
Organic Heart Disease...		17				1		2	5	10	
Bronchitis ...	...	7	1						4		
Pneumonia (all forms) ...	...	4	1						1	5	
Nephritis & Bright's Dis'se		3							1	2	
Congenital Debility and Malformation, including Premature Birth ...	...	3	3								
Violent Deaths, excluding Suicide ...	...	3		1						2	
Other defined diseases ...	...	13				1	1	2	2	7	
Diseases ill-defined or unknown ...	...	6								6	
TOTALS ...	...	79	8	1	1	5	1	7	15	41	

TABLE II.

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE NOTIFIED DURING THE YEAR 1914.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	NUMBER OF CASES NOTIFIED.							Total Cases Removed to Hospital
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.						
		Under 1	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 45.	45 to 65.		65 and upwards.
Diphtheria (including Membranous Croup) ...	10			4	2	2	1	
Scarlet Fever... ..	35	1	1	13	2	4	1	
Enteric Fever	1			1	3	2	1	
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ...	7			1	1	1		
Other forms of Tuberculosis	3	1						
Ages not given in ten cases								
Totals	56	2	1	19	8	9	3	

TOTAL CASES NOTIFIED IN EACH LOCALITY.—Hartland and Welcombe, 11; Parkham and Buckland Brewer, 4; Putford and Newton St. Petrock, 11; Clovelly, 7; Woolsery and Bucks, 8; Monkleigh, 5; Abbotsham and Alwington, 10

ISOLATION HOSPITAL OR HOSPITALS, SANATORIA, &c.—None in District.

TABLE IV.
INFANT MORTALITY.

1914. Nett Deaths from stated causes at various Ages under 1 Year of Age.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Total Deaths under 1 year.								
	Under 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 3 months	3-6 months.	6-9 months.	9-12 months.
Scarlet Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	1
Tuberculous Meningitis ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	1
Other Tuberculous Diseases ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	1
Bronchitis ... ..	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	1
Pneumonia (all forms) ... ..	...	1	...	...	3	...	...	...	3
Premature Birth	2	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	2	1	...	1	4	...	2	2	8

Nett Births in the year—Legitimate, 113; Illegitimate, 5.

Nett Deaths in the year of Legitimate Infants 6; Illegitimate Infants, 2.